

### *On a Man's Writing*

you may have noted how instantly they will turn their Attention away from any of the aspects of nature, however rare or striking, if human objects present themselves to view in any active manner. This "leaning to our kind" brings each individual not only under the influence attending immediate association with a few, but under the operation of numberless influences, from all the moral diversities of which lie is a spectator in the living world ; a complicated though insensible tyranny, of which every fashion, folly, and vice, may exercise its part.

Some persons would be able to recollect very strong and influential impressions made, in almost the first years of life, by some of the events and appearances which they witnessed in surrounding society. But whether the operation on us of the formative power of the community began with impressions of extraordinary force or not, it has been prolonged through the whole course of our acquaintance with mankind. It is no little effect for the living world to have had on us, that very many of our present *opinions* are owing to what we have seen and experienced in it. That thinking which has involuntarily been kept in exercise OP it, however remiss and desultory, could not fail to result in a number of settled notions, which may be said to be shaped upon its facts and practices. We could not be in sight of it, and in intercourse with it, without the formation of opinions adjusted to what we found in it ; and thus far it has been the creator of our mental economy. But its operation has not stopped here. It will not confine itself to occupying the understanding, and yield to be a mere subject for judgments to be formed upon ; but all the while that the observer is directing on it the exercise of his judicial capacity, it is reactively throwing on him various moral influences and infections.

### LETTER III.

A PERSON capable of being deeply interested, and accustomed to reflect on his feelings, will have observed in himself this subjection to the influences of what has been presented to him in society. Their force may have been sufficient in some instances to go far toward new-modelling